

Pete Laney, David Farabee, I appreciate what they have done. Texas will be a better State because of the actions that they have taken on behalf of the people of Texas; and hopefully all of the legislature, both sides of the aisle, will come to their senses and will stop letting Washington determine how the Texas legislature should be run. Texans can take care of Texas.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 53 DEMOCRATS OF THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here today in the U.S. House and say congratulations to our heroes, our 53 heroes in Texas of the Texas House of Representatives. They are fighting for some basic principles, the heroes of democracy. Texas Democrats have used the last tool provided to them. For so many of them from the Texas House to agree to walk out demonstrates the depth of their commitment, the strength of their purpose, and the nobility of their cause.

This is not just about a map. It is about a democratic process, participation in the rights of the minority to have a voice in the process. Republicans in Texas need to learn that having power and using it wisely are not the same thing. Rather than waste time on divisive redistricting schemes pushed on by the Washington Republican leaders, Texas Republicans should have focused on the truly pressing business before the Texas legislature and before Texas, such as issues of balancing the budget, such as the issues of encouraging economic growth, such as the issues of enhancing educational opportunities both for public education and higher education, as well as providing health care access to our children and families.

As Texans, we recognize that we have the largest number of uninsured in Texas, and we recognize that we need more resources. We ought to be trying to solve those issues rather than doing what is being done now.

So I want to take this time to congratulate them in putting their personal interests aside. These 53 Democrats, members of the Texas House of Representatives have said enough is enough. "Basta." United, these brave Texans have hailed and created and made move and have inspired all of Texas to do the right thing.

I want to take this time to recognize the newspapers and the editorials that have been in their favor. When we look at the Houston Chronicle editorials, the San Antonio editorials. And if I can, I will read the San Antonio Express-News editorial which summed it up when they said "... the House has pushed through a variety of measures that have more to do with the enthu-

siasms of ideologues than with the good of the State. A totally inadequate State budget is the most egregious sin."

"Coming in a close second is the blatantly partisan congressional redistricting scheme . . . concocted up by White House political guru Karl Rove and U.S. Representative TOM DELAY . . ." the Express-News indicated.

Taking these cues from the majority leader's office here in Washington, Texas Republicans want to deny Texas voters the choice they have to make. They want to impose a congressional quota. Texas voters said no, and now Texas Democrats say no.

If we look at my particular district, I am given close to 20 or 30 additional counties. At the present time I represent San Antonio and south; and if we look at the map, my district is completely wiped out and given to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), who will go now all the way to Austin. My district from San Antonio was stretched 600 miles to the borders with New Mexico and takes 40-something thousand people from El Paso. If we look all the way from San Antonio all the way down to El Paso, over 600 miles. So when we look at those types of interests and we look at what has been done by the maps, we know that they are maps basically for purposes of grabbing power.

The law says that the States have an obligation to draw their lines during the process of the census. If the State chooses to do this now, it will set a very negative precedent. It will basically say that anytime someone else takes power and decides to gerrymander or knock off someone because they choose to get angry with them, they can redraw the lines at any time during the decade and come back and be able to change their lines so that someone else will not win.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members, especially those that I am really proud of, especially Representative Carlos Uresti, Representative Puente, Representative Guillen, and Representative Villarreal, and Representative Kino Flores.

HONORING THE 53 DEMOCRATS OF THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we have heard over the past 1½ to 2 hours a number of Members come to the floor of the House and cite a prestigious and prominent group of Americans known to us as the Texas Dems 53, Texas Dems 51, just plain brave Texans, sheroes and heroes and simply Americans.

The issue may be confusing because I might imagine that it becomes isolated as a finite, narrow political debate. But today in discussing this issue, I encour-

age individuals who are inquiring about this process to read the Madison papers to understand the process of debate that was the very underpinning of the Constitutional Convention that helped design this Nation and this democracy. If they would do that, they would understand that, in fact, those who are standing about the process that does not work in Texas are actually brave and important components to the history of this State and the history of this Nation.

It is extremely important to recognize that these individuals, 53 Democrats, have tried over and over again to be collegiate and collaborative in working on behalf of the interests of the people of Texas in the shadow of a war that was fought to promote the ideals of this Nation. Is it not shameful that these Democrats coming from all over the State of Texas, rural, urban and otherwise, is it not important to note that all they wanted to do is to represent their constituents?

On the question of the budget in Texas, they wanted to add amendments to protect those children who are being cut, 270,000 of them being cut, if the Members will, from the children's health insurance program. They wanted to stop the abusive restructuring of Medicaid so that less and less people could utilize the services. They wanted to make sure that we continued the access of the graduates of 2003 to the institutions of higher learning by funding those institutions of higher learning at higher percentages. Mr. Speaker, they wanted to do their job.

But yet, what was fostered upon them was an ugly redistricting map that could not be called anything but a grab of power, a denigration of the Voter Rights Act of 1965, a disrespect of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and an absolute coup d'etat as it relates to power in America. As so stated by the leader of this particular body, majority leader, we are in power in Austin, we are in power in Washington, there will be no compromise.

So those of us who are attempting to work on behalf of this State wondered why this kind of meat, if the Members will, cutter was used to draw the district, and frankly here is why. This is a district, the kind of district that we could almost imagine that the courts will find ridiculous. Here is the fifth ward of Texas where Barbara Jordan was born. We can see how it dips down into a totally unrelated district, catches it so it can go all the way here and become a district. Why? No one knows. But this is the ninth district; and it used to have NASA, hardworking people like the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) and of course his predecessors that have worked so hard to ensure the funding for NASA that Lyndon Baines Johnson originated on behalf of America.

All of a sudden now, this has moved out of the traditional communities of interest and moved into a district totally unrelated and happens to belong